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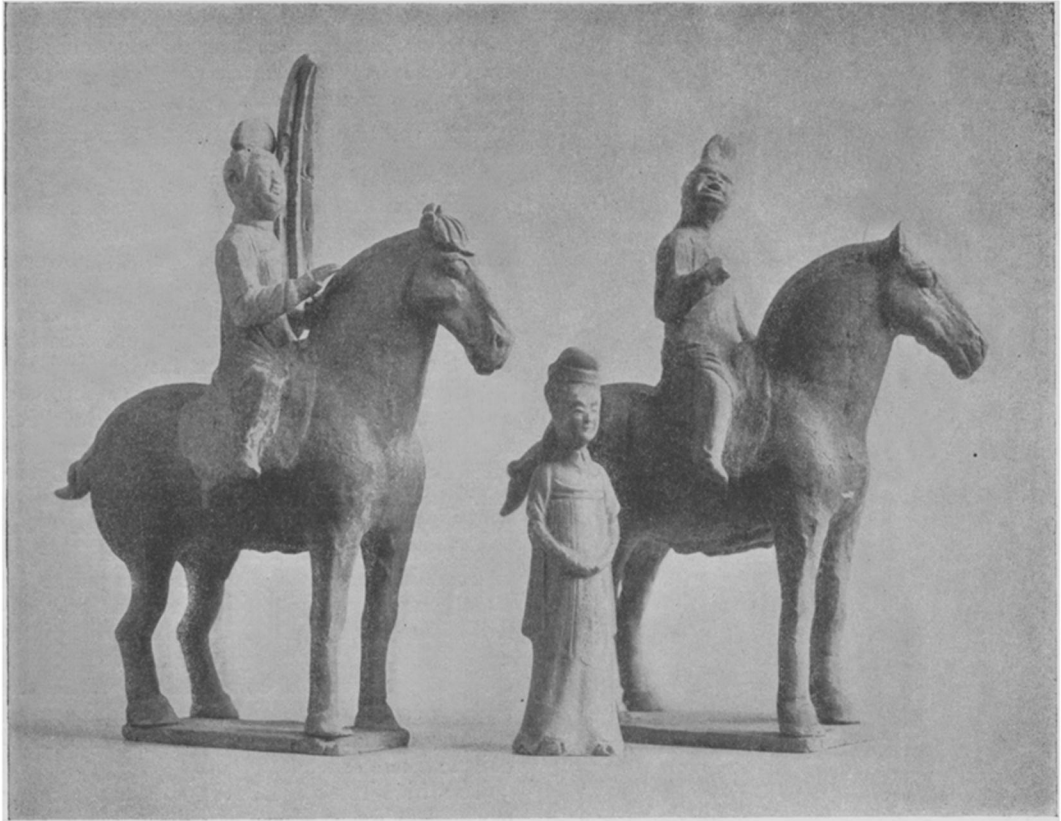
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Chinese Terra-cotta Grave Figures, probably about Fourth Century A.D.

dwarf jesters ; from noble ladies clad in the hobble skirts of the period to slatternly scullery wenches ; from the chieftain's steed to the humble hen ; in short, they bring vividly before us the entire daily life and custom of the period, and have therefore, in addition to their artistic interest, a great ethnological and historical value.

F. G. C.

Print Rooms

Exhibition of Mezzotint Engravings by and after J. M. W. Turner

ALL devotees of Turner, all lovers of really fine prints, all admirers of mezzotints, will join in welcoming the exhibition of mezzotints by and after J. M. W. Turner now open in the Print Rooms. Those who cultivate the excellent habit of visiting the Print Rooms on the ground floor of the Museum may have derived enjoyment during the last months from the selection of English and other mezzotints which form part of the Museum's own collection. But for sheer beauty of impressions, for the gorgeous effect of the exhibition as a whole, the material there shown pales before the plates which now fill the cases. The Boston public remains unaware of the treasures of art possessed and enjoyed by private collectors in this community, until an exhibition like the present Turner show reveals to the art lover the splendid results brought about by years of patient, careful collecting. No museum here or abroad owns a set of Turner prints of the uniform excellence here shown, fully equalling, if not excelling, the greatest Turner collections of the world.

Unlike the painter who cannot stop his picture at various stages of completion and at the same time carry it to the utmost perfection within his power, the artist who expresses his art on the copper plate can print and thereby perpetuate — in proofs



Chinese Terra-cotta Grave Figures

*Little Devil's Bridge*

— the varying, beautiful effects which appear on the half-finished plate, before they merge into other effects in the finished engraving. Illustrations of this delightful privilege of the artist-engraver greet the visitor on his entrance into the Print Rooms. Here is the “Little Devil’s Bridge,” for instance, in Case 2, near the door, which illustrates quite fully the genesis of this famous print. In the slanting case we see the etching, the structural basis of the picture; like the bare tree in winter, it displays in few expressive lines the ground work, the theme waiting fulfillment. Over this etched foundation the mezzotint rocker spreads a velvety tone of deep, even shadow. Then comes the work which justifies the name of the process: mezzo = half, tinta = tint or tone. The scraper clears away the depth of uniform shade, modelling the masses of sky and rock into tones of varying depth. The picture appears gloomy, broadly treated in imposing masses — we see it thus in the early proof in the upper case at the left. Guided by this proof the mezzotinter continues his work, guided by a sepia sketch which shows him exactly what Turner wants. Then a proof is submitted to the artist, who carefully scrutinizes it, and returns it to the engraver with corrections sometimes drawn in with pencil or indicated by touches of white color, showing where he wants an accent, a greater depth of tone, or additional light. We have such a touched proof before us, next to the early proof. It bears corrections and marginal directions to the engraver. Under this is the final outcome, the finished plate. This is only one of many instances where the evolution of the plate is shown. A striking example of this advantage peculiar to prints, which permits us to watch the picture as it grows under the hand of the artist, will be found in Case 14. Here we see Norham castle in the indistinct light of earliest dawn. No detail can as yet

be clearly seen, only broad masses of shadow and subdued light, and then the sky pales and details accent themselves, until the full glory of the morning sun blazes forth above the castle and day has come.

The “Liber Studiorum,” that world-famed series of landscapes, is fully represented in the exhibition, not only those plates which were published by Turner, but also those (Cases 22–30) which were laid aside in various stages of completion when the artist discontinued his publication. In most of the cases where Turner had only left a sepia drawing of the subject contemplated, a leading English mezzotint artist of the present day, Frank Short, has interpreted Turner on the copper. Naturally proofs

of the unpublished plates of the “Liber,” some of which were finished by Turner, but never brought into the trade, are exceedingly rare. The grand “Stonehenge,” for instance — massive remains of ancient Druid worship, under a wind-blown lowering sky at sunset — is one of only two proofs in existence. The “Lost Sailor” (Case 23) dying on an iron-bound coast, lashed by furious waves, which leave a smother of spray and torn water as they gather for a fresh onslaught, is another of those magnificent creations which never were given to the world at large by Turner. The same is true of the calm moonlit sea directly under this scene of wild turmoil.

Fully as rare, and equally endowed with the marvellous charm of Turner’s poetic insight into the moods of sea and sky, are the small plates shown in Cases 31 to 34. They are named “Little Liber,” for want of an original title. Here we can follow Turner himself in his work on the metal and see the moonlight scene (Case 33) shaping itself into lovely, final excellence.* Portions

* The plates of the “Little Liber” were found after Turner’s death in his rooms. Impressions were pulled from them by Sir Seymour Haden at that time, and a few of these, signed by Haden, are shown side by side with Turner’s own proofs.

*Inverary Pier, Loch Fyne*

of the series of *The Rivers* and *The Ports of England* and single plates fill the remaining cases.

Who would study Turner in the vast extent of his versatile art has now a rare opportunity for so doing, thanks to this generous loan, an opportunity which cannot well be excelled, and should by all means be improved. E. H. R.



Dancing Girl, Samoa
Water-color

John La Farge

La Farge Memorial Exhibition

THE Museum had on exhibition during the month of January a collection of oils, water-colors, and pencil sketches by the late John La Farge. The exhibition contained a number of his earlier oils done in or about Newport, some of the best known South Sea Islands and Samoan sketches, and many interesting flower studies. With the exception of first studies for allegorical and Biblical subjects and a single stained glass window, his decorative work was not represented.

Early in La Farge's career his attention was turned to the study of landscape and the problems of form seen through varying atmospheric conditions. He believed that everything could be invested with beauty by painting it with sincerity and accuracy of observation, and never attempted the obvious compositions characteristic of the French school of his student days. Thus we find in him a reverent exactness in the rendering of natural structure joined with a constant effort to set down the imaginative essence of the landscape as a whole.

A large canvas called "*Paradise Valley, Newport*," shows the best qualities of his earlier and perhaps most conscientious efforts to approach

the directness of nature. In full midday light, softened by the slight haziness so characteristic of our midsummer, an undulating valley slopes to a placid sea reflecting the misty sky. In this quiet New England landscape La Farge not only makes us realize the pleasant freedom of space out of doors, but adds the infinite mystery and variety of nature's detail, the structure of the rocks, the grass and the bushes, the momentary impression of objects as a cloud passes.

Two small snow scenes giving the same sense of space portray the loneliness of New England winter. One represents a solitary tree in an expanse of white seen through falling snow. The single small tree is significant in its helpless, forlorn contest with the storm. In the other picture a steep-roofed cottage lies half buried, hugged by bushes in a field of unbroken snow. The sky is leaden, and the only sign of life is the smoke curling from the chimney. These commonplace subjects La Farge treats with such truth of space-relations in atmosphere and with such accurate observation of the infinite gradations of light on broad expanses of snow, that our response is even more definite than if we were present at the actual scene. These studies are not studio pictures, but careful attempts to reproduce visual impressions.

The study of life in movement, the play of light on warm flesh—these were the problems which interested La Farge in his Samoan sketches. We see female bathers in violent action against dark foliage, half nude forms in rhythmical dances, or sliding through falls of racing water. In the "*Seated Dance*" Siva and two other beautiful Samoan girls, nude to the waist and adorned with wreaths and necklaces of foliage, move their arms and bodies in pantomimic dance. It is evening, and artificial light flickers on moving muscles under richly tinted skin. In another sketch a single nude girl holding blue drapery to the wind balances on a canoe, and the subtle form, silhouetted against blue water and the softer tones of the sky, suggests the gentle sway of the slender craft.

As the Samoan pictures deal with the intensity of physical life, those executed later in Tahiti and the other South Sea Islands, are primarily studies of landscape and atmosphere. La Farge



Landscape
Oil

John La Farge